

REMARKS

Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of the present application in view of the foregoing amendments and in view of the reasons that follow.

The Abstract is objected to. Applicants have amended the abstract to obviate the grounds of the objection. A substitute abstract is attached hereto.

Claims 1-8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over GB 2 347 124 and U.S. Patent No. 6,405,962 (Hirase). GB 2 347 124 claims priority to the same Japanese patent application as U.S. Patent No. 6,419,176. Thus, as explained further below, GB 2 347 124 is not prior art to the present application.


Applicants have submitted concurrently herewith a Request to Correct Inventorship under 37 C.F.R. § 1.48(a) adding Mr. Isamu Mizuno as an inventor. Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.78(a)(3), Applicants have also submitted a Petition for an Unintentionally Delayed Domestic Priority Claim, claiming a right of priority under 35 U.S.C. § 120 to U.S. Patent Application No. 09/513,187, filed February 25, 2000, U.S. Patent No. 6,419,176. The specification has been amended to contain a specific reference to the earlier filed application as required by the statute. Failure to submit a timely priority claim resulted because Applicants did not realize that Mr. Mizuno was the inventor of the clutch mechanism recited in the claims at the time the application was filed.

Provided the above noted Petition is accepted, the rejection of claims 1-8 should be withdrawn because GB 2 347 124 is not available as a prior art reference.

Applicants believe that the present application is now in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is felt that a telephone interview would expedite allowance of the application.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: 7/28/03

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SHOULD ADDITIONAL FEES BE NECESSARY IN CONNECTION WITH THE FILING OF THIS PAPER, OF IF A PETITION FOR EXTENSION OF TIME IS REQUIRED FOR TIMELY ACCEPTANCE OF SAME, THE COMMISSIONER IS HEREBY AUTHORIZED TO CHARGE DEPOSIT ACCOUNT NO. 19-0741 FOR ANY SUCH FEES; AND APPLICANT(S) HEREBY PETITION FOR ANY NEEDED EXTENSION OF TIME.